

ENGINEER CORPS OF THE ARMY.

JUNE 14, 1898.—Committed to the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union and ordered to be printed.

Mr. HULL, from the Committee on Military Affairs, submitted the following

REPORT.

[To accompany H. R. 10460.]

The Committee on Military Affairs, to whom was referred the bill (H. R. 10460) relative to Corps of Engineers of the Army, report the same back to the House with the recommendation that it do pass.

Letters from Chief of Engineers and Secretary of War are made part of this report.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, May 19, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copy of a letter from the Chief of Engineers, United States Army, dated May 16, 1898, together with draft of a bill providing for a gradual increase in the number of officers of the Corps of Engineers.

The duties devolving upon the Corps of Engineers at this time are fully stated by the Chief of Engineers, and in view of the importance of the work and the urgent need of an increase in force the legislation requested is earnestly recommended to the favorable consideration of Congress.

Very respectfully,

R. A. ALGER,
Secretary of War.

THE SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES.

OFFICE OF THE CHIEF OF ENGINEERS, UNITED STATES ARMY,
Washington, May 16, 1898.

SIR: I have the honor to submit herewith a draft of a bill for a gradual increase in the number of officers of the Corps of Engineers of the United States Army.

The duties devolving upon the Corps of Engineers at this time consist in the construction of fortifications, the defense of harbors by submarine mines, the construction and repair of light-houses, the improvement of rivers and harbors, the construction and care of canals and breakwaters, the designation of harbor lines, the supervision of the construction of bridges, the Washington Aqueduct, the public buildings and grounds in the District of Columbia, the Engineer Commissioner of the District, and, in fact, all matters of engineering connected with the military defense of the nation, the improvement of rivers, harbors, canals, etc., and the con-

struction of light-houses. In addition to the duties enumerated, a large percentage of the corps are on duty as instructors at the West Point Military Academy and with the Battalion of Engineers and schools of instruction for torpedo defense and other engineering work, and as members of boards of engineers and commissions of various kinds.

The present number of officers in the Corps of Engineers is 109, exclusive of additional second lieutenants attached to the corps. This bill provides for a gradual addition of eighteen officers, or an increase of about one-sixth of the present number.

The necessity for this increase appears from the following considerations: The present organization was established by the act of July 28, 1866. Since that time the duties of the corps have been enormously increased. The great extension made by Congress in the improvement of rivers and harbors and the construction of fortifications for seacoast defense makes it imperatively necessary that more officers should be provided for the efficient management of these works. An examination of the last statement of the duties of officers of the Corps of Engineers will show that nearly all the officers in actual charge of works have so many duties that efficient management is only secured by most incessant labor, and personal supervision is not in many cases possible, though personal responsibility remains. The present war will necessitate doubling the already too extensive duties of a number of officers in order to provide necessary details for field service.

The necessity for an increase of the Corps of Engineers has been recognized for several years. In the annual report of the Chief of Engineers for 1894 the late Brig. Gen. Thomas L. Casey, Chief of Engineers, remarked as follows:

"The public works to be carried on under the supervision of the Chief of Engineers are steadily increasing, but the number of officers available for assignment to the execution of these works is decreasing, owing to the number detached for various duties assigned by law.

"When an officer is to be detailed for such detached duty, when sickness necessitates the temporary relief of an officer, when new and additional duties are to be assigned, it is growing more and more difficult to meet the demands. More officers are needed, and, while I do not now suggest the number of officers by which the Corps of Engineers should be increased, I believe an increase to be an imperative necessity."

This was written before the great increase in the work of constructing fortifications was commenced.

In his annual report for 1896 the Secretary of War refers to the work of the Corps of Engineers as follows:

"The work of the Corps of Engineers, always important, has during the past year been unusually heavy. The fortification act carried the largest amount ever appropriated for this object in one act, and the expansion of work necessitated by it, together with the large amounts provided for river and harbor work, has called for the greatest activity on the part of its officers."

In his report for 1897 the Secretary of War remarks:

"The foregoing concise statement clearly summarizes the important work committed to the charge of the Corps of Engineers.

"The time seems to have arrived when an increase in the number of officers and enlisted men of that corps is indispensable. The immense work intrusted to a few men is overtaxing. * * * It is absolutely impossible for one man, having a large number of works a long distance apart, to constantly supervise the construction of improvements in his charge."

As indicative of the great increase of the duties of the Corps of Engineers without any increase in its members, it will be noted that the annual appropriations expended under the direction of officers of the Corps of Engineers between 1864 and 1879 averaged about \$4,250,000; from 1880 to 1889, about \$9,750,000, and between 1890 and 1897 this average had increased to about \$20,000,000. The number of separate works provided for in 1880 was about 34, which number had increased in 1896 to over 500.

The annual report of the Chief of Engineers in 1870 covered 630 pages, which in 1880 had increased to 2,556, in 1890 to 3,718, and in 1897 to 4,225 pages. Thus, while the space required to record the work of the Corps of Engineers has increased sevenfold, the number of officers has remained the same. This has necessitated an immense increase in the area of and amount of work in the individual districts and in their number, and the assignment to the charge of many of such districts of officers most competent on account of experience and professional training, but with rank far below that which is commensurate with great engineering and financial responsibility connected with the positions occupied. One of the just effects of the proposed act would be, by the slight increase of the number in each grade, to give, to a greater extent than now permissible, to the officers in charge of districts rank more nearly commensurate with their experience and professional training and with the responsibility attached to the works of their districts.

The bill provides for a gradual increase of the corps by officers in each grade as follows, viz, 1 colonel, 2 lieutenant-colonels, 4 majors, 5 captains, 4 first lieutenants, and 2 second lieutenants. These numbers are as nearly as possible in the proportion of the existing numbers in the different grades.

The provision for no promotion to an original vacancy until after a service of three years in the next lower grade prevents too rapid promotion. In view of the great and increasing demands for the services of engineer officers, it seems urgently necessary that arrangements should be made immediately for the increase of the corps.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN M. WILSON,
Brig. Gen., Chief of Engineers, U. S. Army.

Hon. R. A. ALGER,
Secretary of War.

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H. Rep. 6—32

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